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THE HISTORY OF EARLY EDUCATION.

II. THE SEMITIC RACES.

ASSYRIANS AND BABYLONIANS; ARABS; PHœNICIANS.

The Semitic Races occupied that central region of the old world which extends from the Arabian Gulf to the confines of Asia Minor and from the Zagros Mountains on the East to the Mediterranean. Arabs, Babylonians, Assyrians, Elamites, Chaldeans, Phœnicians, Jews are all different nations of the same race. The greatest of these nations was the Jews or Israelites. In what may be regarded as prehistoric times there was a constant struggle between the various tribes of the Mesopotamian basin, always under the banners of some tribal god. They seem to have been a most religious, or rather superstitious, and at the same time, it must be conferred, a most immoral race. Even the religion itself was in some cases and in some of its aspects a service of lust. The purer religion of Israel did not always escape the degrading influence of the other Semitic races, such as the Phœnicians; indeed the struggles of the Jews with other Semitic races is generally a struggle, under the guidance of the prophets, for the expulsion of alien elements or for the dominancy within Israel of the theocratic and secular principles of polity and government.

At the time Moses died (about 1280 B. C.) there was conflict everywhere. The Assyrians, whose centre was Nineveh, had already begun to extend their power over other races and the empire rapidly grew in the ninth century B. C. Nineveh seems to have been always more warlike than the great tribal centre of Babylon;* and after the middle of the 8th century, B. C., the latter was virtually in subjection to Nineveh.

In the middle of the seventh century, B. C., the Assyrian empire suddenly collapsed, after it had extended itself to Media in the north-east and Egypt and Arabia on the South. It was an empire of violence; but it concentrated in itself and raised to a historical world-importance the vigor of the Semitic race. The ruins

*As a help in taking a chronological and comparative view, it is of importance to note that Solomon, who raised the power of the Israelites to its highest point died in 975 B. C., and that the date of the foundation of Rome was about 750 B. C.

of Nineveh to this day testify to its greatness while the great public works of Babylon and Susa are matters of history. It fell before the Medes (some time in the seventh century) who were assisted by the Babylonians. It had enjoyed an existence of 250 years. It was the first conquering power, Ranke says, which we meet with in the history of the world.

But though the empire was thus short-lived, the Assyrians and Babylonians had, long before the period of external conquest attained to political constitutions and to a high degree of material civilization. We may date this from about 1400 years B. C. They owed nothing to the example and influence of Egypt. Their civilization had its origin near the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Of the education of these races we can know little except inferentially. In the great cities they had architects, sculptors, astronomers, workers in brass and iron, and engineers. Boys were doubtless trained by some system of apprenticeship in these and all other arts. Special training to the military art must have taken a high place in a nation which had to retain its position by force of arms. The priesthood and the Chaldean astronomers had their own schools. But all instruction had either direct reference to the practical needs of life or was of a very restricted professional character. The study of these sacred books and traditions, astronomy and astrology, occupied the priesthood—a profession largely, if not wholly hereditary. There was no education of the man in any true sense; nor indeed could there have been with the conceptions of God and of religion which characterized the Assyrians and Babylonians. The belief in multitudinous demons seem to have been general, and the consequent practice of magic and incantations. In the earliest times it was held that the spirits of all the dead lived forever in a gloomy Hades; in later times, the gods received into pleasant regions all who served them well during life. The ethical importance of this belief will be apparent.

The position of women in ancient Nineveh and Babylon seems to have been substantially that of slavery to the desires of man. They were one more luxury in an already luxurious mode of life, and where this is the case, we can expect to find no true family life, at least no life in which the moral training of the young is directed towards any moral aim. The Chaldean priests—a

class apart—were among the first students of astronomy and along with their astrological knowledge handed down such sacred traditions as the race possessed. They also had an oral if not a written literature which embodied their philosophy of life, religious traditions and stories of gods and heroes. To this we must add that both in Nineveh and Babylon the arts of life reached great perfection: their architecture for example was conceived and executed with Egyptian vastness of imagination and great engineering skill.

Men who were at once slaves of a military despotism and of degrading superstitions could receive little education from civil and social life. Nor is there evidence that in any department save the arts, that ministered to the luxuries of existence, there was any instruction, if we except the Chaldean priests and astrologers who may be regarded as a class apart, exercising no direct influence on the upbringing of youth.

THE ARABS.

We know that Arabs have an ancient literature—especially in the domain of poetry. Before the time of Mohammed, but still in what is commonly regarded as the modern epoch, the Arabs had their Olympic literary contests at the great fairs of Mecca and Okadh, and the poems to which prizes were awarded were re-written in golden characters and suspended in the Kaaba, the national temple at Mecca. The Arabs have always shown lyrical poetic genius of no common kind, and accordingly had a distinctly native literature, orally handed down,* and so continually extended and recast.

I am not aware of any trustworthy material bearing on the subject of pre-Christian Arab education even in the settled civilizations of the fertile south. We may, of course draw inferences from those facts of their civilization which are historical; but I think such a manner of handling the history of education tends, if carried beyond very narrow limits, to discredit the whole subject.

The revival of letters and of the sciences and arts under the Mohammedan conquerors in the eighth and subsequent centuries belongs to the mediæval period, and a good deal worthy of atten-

* Tradition names Lokman, a contemporary of King David, as a great poet, and "round his name," says Düncker, "is gathered a number of proverbs, gnomes and fables." There were rhapsodists who had a store of traditional poems which they related or sang at tribal meetings.

tion might be written on the mosque schools and the universities and libraries of that period. But this would find its proper place in the history of the modern educational world.

PHœNICIANS.

The narrow coast-line between Lebanon and the Mediterranean (little more than 120 miles long and 15 broad), was occupied by a Semitic branch famous in history for their commercial enterprise. Tyre and Sidon were the two chief cities. Here again we find the same material aims and luxurious living which marked the Assyrians and Babylonians. The former owed their wealth to trade, the latter found the basis of its material civilization in the fertile basins of the Euphrates and Tigris. Phœnicia was the gate of communication between Europe and the Orient. With Phœnicia also is associated the invention of symbols for numbers and the elements of sound in words; but these were originally drawn from Egypt. The necessities of commerce would naturally lead to the development of what they derived from Egypt, with a view to facilitate communication with foreign nations. Their buildings, their harbors and ships, and the works of art which they produced—all point to a high efficiency in their technical instruction. But commerce and money-making seem to have engrossed their minds, and there is no evidence of any moral aim in their education. Their religion—like that of the Babylonians and Assyrians—was outside their daily lives and was a religion of mystery and superstition on the one hand, and of religious rites, frequently of debased character, on the other. It is only among the Egyptians and the Jews that religious conceptions were of a kind to affect daily conduct and to mould character.

THE JEWS.

Of the Semitic Races, by far the most famous was the Jews or Hebrews who originally emigrated from the east side of the Euphrates to Canaan or Palestine about 2,000 B. C. Their history, however, properly begins with the emigration from Egypt under Moses, about 1320 B. C. The land on the east and west of Jordan was divided among the twelve tribes, and the tribe of Levi were allotted cities throughout Canaan and were allowed to settle where they pleased, receiving tithes.

After holding their own as a kind of federated republic under chiefs called Judges—the last of whom was the prophet Samuel—a king (Saul the Benjamite) was chosen 1067 B. C., David succeeding him in 1055 B. C.

Prior to David the priesthood and its ceremonial was not organized. Under him and his equally great successor Solomon the Hebrews reached their highest eminence as a nation. Their very successes led to their misfortunes, for they came into hostile contact with the other great Semitic races. First, the Assyrians 720 B. C., conquered the country and carried the mass of the people captive to Media—putting Assyrian colonists in their place. The mixed people revived as a nation; but they were again subdued by the Babylonians (588 B. C.), who burned the Temple at Jerusalem and carried the leading families into captivity. The exile lasted about 70 years; but after the captives were allowed to return only the lower section of the population along with the priests and scribes took advantage of the permission. It was during the exile that the Jewish religion began to develop its formal doctrine and ritual; and these became fully formulated after the return and the completion of the second Temple (516 B. C.). The written law as well as oral law was now strictly enforced and the beginnings laid of a system of legal formalism and of ecclesiastical ceremonial which in time became oppressive. It certainly secured, however, the unity of the Jewish race spite of their frequent migrations and their voluntary dispersion (before the Christian Era) through the cities of the Mediterranean.

It may be truly said that God began first to dwell with men among the Jews. Whatever view may be taken of Biblical matters, this may be accepted as a historical fact. To Moses and the Israelites the world owes, not the conception of the spirituality and unity of God, but the more practical conception of the one God as a self-subsistent *moral* Personality. For this and their literature, devoted to the expression of this leading thought and collected (if we except the Talmudic writings) in the Old Testament, the World owes a permanent debt to the Israelites. They are a possession which must always influence the thought and life of the human race. The religion of Jehovah was a protest against both the Idolatry of the other Semitic races and the Pantheism of the Orient.

The people, from whom came the Book of Job and the Psalms and Genesis, and whose worldly wisdom found expression through Solomon in the Book of Proverbs, was certainly a very remarkable people. The intensity of their personal character, and of their family life and state-life is what most powerfully impresses the reader of history. The *intensity* had its natural concomitant in exceeding narrowness so that even the "I am that I am" of Moses, while it was to them the name for the Universal Power had yet for the chief object of its eternal existence—the Jews. He was from the first a National God. Spite of this, the great fact remains that God for the first time now truly dwells among men and is personally concerned with the conduct of each man in his daily life, He demands certain observances from men—not solely or chiefly in the form of appeasing sacrifice, but as part of a *bar-gain*. This one idea of moral contract with the Divine Being was sufficient to educate a race.

Education of Priests.—Even, however, when dealing with the Jews, I would remark that the fact of a distinct sacerdotal order which as such embraces an educational curriculum for priests, must always restrict the range and also the aims of the education of the people as a whole. The masses will simply pick up, as best they can, what is necessary for their daily occupations. The higher education of the country—indeed most of what we mean in modern times by the term "Education" is the education of the priestly order, and especially is this the case where the order is also a hereditary caste. It must always indeed be the instinct, if not the conscious purpose, of such a caste to keep the masses of the people in ignorance, or at least to regulate the amount and kind of knowledge to be conceded to them, and to reserve for themselves the power which inheres in exclusive knowledge. Nor can I find in anything I have read, evidence that it was otherwise with the Israelites. The literature we have before us speaks to a high intellectual force and a lofty ethical ideal among the few and pre-supposes considerable education among those to whom it was addressed. The audience, however, must have been a very small minority of the nation. The range of instruction too, whether among the Levites and Priests, or in the "Schools of the Prophets" was restricted by the theocratic conception. The priests alone (*i. e.*, Levites of the house of Aaron) had to learn all the details of the Judaic ceremonial. They were the sole channel of sacrifice. This, cere-

monial with learning to read, to write, with a view to the multiplication of MSS. ; instruction in music, and perhaps verse ; a little Chaldean astronomy, and a thorough knowledge of the law (for the priestly order was always a civil as well as ecclesiastical authority), would appear to sum up the curriculum of the most learned, till about 200 years B. C.

Schools of the Prophets.—The Israelites present many problems to the mind of an unbiased inquirer ; but this is not the place to consider any of these. We might have ventured to say *a priori* that a small race which could begin its history by embodying in its creed all that was purest and best in the primitive faith of the Orient, and boldly annexing the God of the Heavens and the Earth as a private possession, while contracting with Him for certain advantages chiefly of a material kind, must evolve out of the whole a higher and freer spiritual life than any that an official priesthood could conceive. It is true that the nationalizing of God was a common characteristic of all the Semitic and some other races, but the Hebrews had growing up in the midst of them a conception of God of so universal a type, that we should naturally expect them to rise above their fellow-Semites. And, in truth, owing to the deeper spiritual life which their great fundamental conception generated, the universality and dominancy of the God of the Hebrews as a "God above all gods" gradually found expression in the "Schools of the Prophets." These were instituted by private individuals. They had a loftier aim than any that the Law prescribed. Founded by Samuel, they existed primarily for the maintenance of the tradition of the idea of Jehovah in all its purity. Philosophic contemplation, and not merely the technicalities of ritual or of the law, occupied the students at these schools. In them we find the spirit as opposed to the form of Judaism ; and men emanating from them exercised a powerful influence on the life and public policy of the Jews, recalling princes and people alike to the worship of the true God, and that "in spirit and in truth." They also seemed to maintain the theocratic as opposed to the civil theory of government, more than the priestly order itself, but in a broader and more liberal sense.

Education of Scribes.—Again, there was in Palestine (as in Egypt) a class of Scribes (1 Chron. 2, 55) employed in various offices, public and private. This profession would naturally be sought by the more ambitious and intelligent among the Levites and others not of the Levitical caste. They grew into importance

after the captivity. The teachers of these, and of any others who received literary instruction, were doubtless Levites.

Education of the People.—But outside these three classes, priests, prophets and scribes, all occupied with Religion and Law, it cannot be said that instruction in our modern sense was to be found. Nor indeed with a people so narrow, and whose intellectual activity was so exclusively “theological,” was it probable that schools would ever be numerous, except for the defence of the faith against alien intrusion and the strengthening of patriotic traditions. The supreme object of education was neither arts, nor sciences, nor arms, but faith in God and knowledge of the law. The Levites were spread over the whole country, and were thus available as teachers and were in a position to perpetuate the knowledge of the law; and doubtless such instruction as the young obtained outside their families was obtained from them. But the education of the masses, however it may have been aided by the Levites in an irregular and sporadic way, was substantially domestic, traditional, and oral.

Two characteristics of Jewish life and education which distinguish them from other ancient nations have to be here noted: *First*, morality and religion and civil law were substantially one. Wherever there is a religion it influences morality, but in the case of the Jews there was a conscious recognition of this fact. The moral law was in the most literal sense the law of God, and the civil law was a deduction from the moral law. The religious, ecclesiastical, and civil were inextricably interwoven in the daily life of the Jew. *Secondly*, faith in God and a knowledge of the law being the sum of wisdom and theoretically within reach of all, every Jew, however humble, stood in an essential equality with every other. All had equal *claims* to education, *theoretically*, I say. This conception of education as for all citizens was peculiar to the Jews. Neither Persians nor Greeks nor Romans shared it, and even in China it was not understood in the same sense or on the same grounds, although it was indirectly affirmed by throwing open the public examinations to all. In religion there was no esoteric doctrine reserved for a favored caste; on the contrary the profoundest religious thought and the highest religious expression was to be found outside the ceremonial priesthood in the schools of the prophets to which I have referred. To these schools laymen might attach themselves. They were not reserved for a caste.

The beginning and end of the Jewish conception of popular education is contained in the 6th chapter of Deuteronomy, 4th verse:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I commanded thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

The father and mother were thus the divinely appointed teachers. As has been said, "The dwellings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were at once house, school, state and church." The family life was, as I have said, intense, and the more so that the law thus directly addressed parents and placed on them the responsibility for the moral and spiritual well-being of their children. To the Jews more than to any other race we may apply the words of Shakespere:

"Let never day nor night unhallowed pass
But still remember what the Lord hath done."

II Henry, vi., ii.

As might be expected, respect for parents and elders was rigidly enforced.

"Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother," etc.,

"Before the gray head shalt thou stand up."

If we may infer from the Proverbs of Solomon that maxims such as are collected in that book were in general currency, we may further conclude that the domestic education was powerfully re-enforced by traditions of practical wisdom. The Book of Ruth also could have emanated only from a people sensitive to the finer and more spiritual significance of family relations. A present God, whom to fear was "the beginning of wisdom," the honoring of parents and elders, a sacred family life, the memory of a great history and the practical wisdom of proverbs, constituted the elements of the education of the masses. No special *public* means however, were taken to give this education to the people so that the fundamental conception of the equality of all before God, to which I have referred above, remained so far a barren conception, so far as state action to raise all to a certain level of intelligence and life was concerned.

(To be continued.)

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